Transportation and Circulation

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

Introduction

Transportation networks tie a community together and link a community to the outside world. Adequate road systems are essential for the free flow of traffic, and accessibility to all parts of the community. The circulation portion of the Comprehensive Plan focuses on three areas: The composition of the existing system, the usage patterns occurring through Bennet, and the integration of the Village streets with the State Highway system.

Composition

The Village of Bennet has the standard grid system of street design that is very typical for a village of its size and age. Most of the streets in the Village, with a few minor exceptions, have been coated with a bituminous covering. State Highway 43 (Monroe street) running north-south through the Village, and parts of Garden, Madison and Fir streets in the business district are asphalt. The minimum right-of-way recommended for local streets in a village the size of Bennet is 60 feet to accommodate room for utilities and travelway. Minor streets are recommended to have a 50 foot right of way. Nearly all the streets in Bennet are designed at 66 feet, although a few were designed at 33 feet and a few at 41 feet. As future development takes place on or near those minor streets they should be widened to accommodate the additional utility and traffic needs.

The Village currently has 6.21 miles of streets (including Highway 43) within the Village boundaries. The grid system of streets in Bennet, although easy to design, does take a significant amount of land to support. Currently about 25% of the Village land is taken by streets. Future development should incorporate a street design that makes better use of existing land, similar to the cul-de-sac design of Harrison Circle.

The 1992 community survey of Bennet area residents indicated that overall, people were happy with the condition of the streets and street signs. However there was concern about the condition of the ditches and the drainage patterns associated with them. The survey also indicated that a majority of the people would support a tax increase to pay for any improvements to this infrastructure.

Any discussion in the area of circulation would not be complete without some mention of sidewalks as a circulation system. Not all movement through the Village is done by automobile. Sidewalks provide an essential link in the community allowing residents to move about freely and safely throughout the Village proper by foot.

The 1993 community survey indicated a major concern by citizens about the condition of sidewalks. This was also listed as a concern in the 1972 plan. The housing survey, conducted by the Planning Commission with the help of area residents in April of 1993, again listed sidewalks as a major problem. Many of the existing sidewalks are badly in need of repair, and many areas of town have no sidewalks at all. This has the greatest impact on school age children and the elderly.

Usage

Traffic count figures for 1990 shows that traffic load at the south end of the Village was 1,730 vehicles per day, of which 140 are heavy commercial vehicles. The north end of the Village handles 3,480 vehicles per day of which 265 are heavy commercial. The Nebraska Department of Roads estimates that by 2015 the average daily usage on Highway 43 will be 5,985 vehicles with a daily hourly volume peak of 600 vehicles. Indications are that the current system of roadways throughout the Village will handle the traffic load for the foreseeable future.

There was a great deal of concern expressed by citizens about parking in the downtown area. Any future expansion in the downtown area should be carefully designed to ensure adequate parking facilities so as to not allow the area to become too congested.

Most of the commercial and industrial business in the community are relatively well located either on or very near the main arterial of the Village which is State Highway 43. As a result, commercial and industrial traffic does not have to proceed through residential areas for connection to the State Highway system. Future commercial or industrial expansion should also be located in like fashion so as not to create any traffic bottlenecks through the residential areas.

Integration

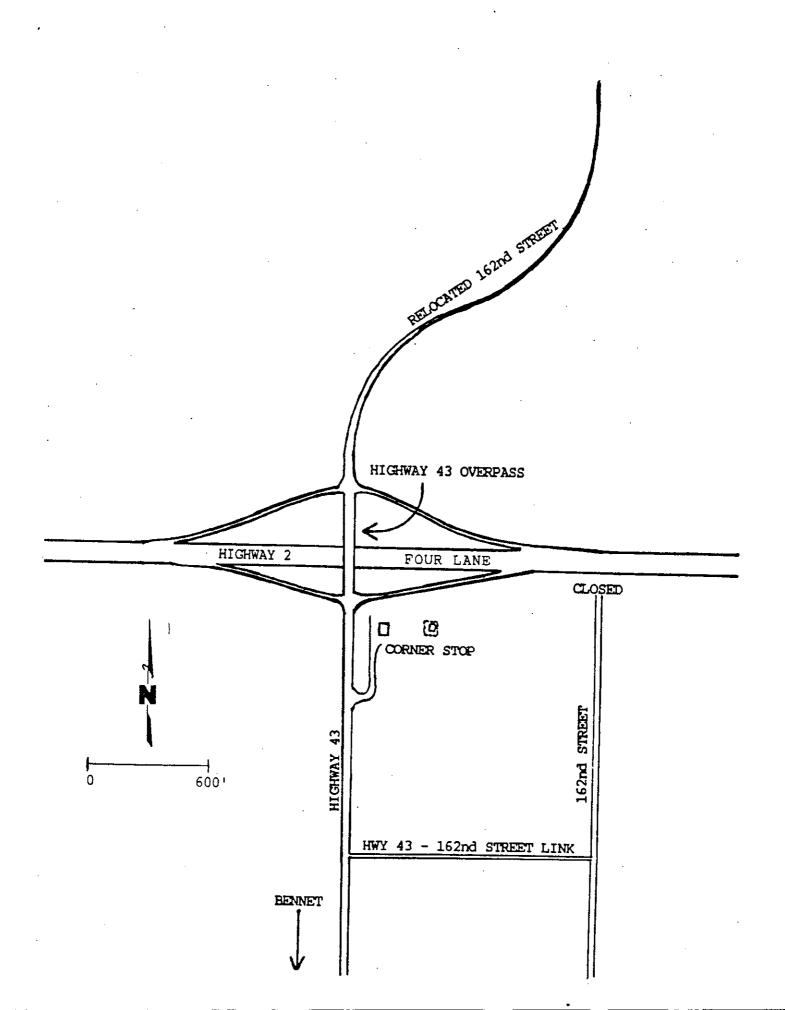
Bennet has the advantage of being only 2 miles from State Highway 2, which is a major arterial for traffic in southeast Nebraska. There are plans in place with State and County officials to place hard surface shoulders on State Highway 43 into Bennet, and to finish widening of State Highway 2 into 4 lanes stretching from Nebraska City to Lincoln. Included in this is an interstate type overpass junction at the intersection of Highway 2 and Highway 43 (Map 3). This puts the Village into a prime location as a gateway for travel to and from that interchange, and could potentially bring expanded business and residential growth into the area.

Conclusions

The current grid system of streets in Bennet is adequate to handle the traffic load now, and into the foreseeable future. In future developments, the street design should allow for flexibility to make best use of the land.

The system of sidewalks in the Village is incomplete and has deteriorated to an unacceptable condition. This is an area that needs a great deal of attention.

Bennet stands to gain significantly in the way of economic activity, business development and residential growth with the current plans for the intersection of Highway 43 and Highway 2. It is vital that the Village be involved with identifying and working with property owners as access is acquired along Highway 43 between Highway 2 and the Village. This is to ensure that the Village's land use plan and the State's right of way acquisition do not defeat future land use options.



Recommendations

- 1. The Village should inventory sidewalks and develop a plan/program for repair or installation of sidewalks where necessary.
- 2. Adopt and enforce street and sidewalk minimum requirements for areas of future development within the Village and areas that may develop for future annexation.
- 3. Adopt and enforce minimum parking requirements in areas of new business development.
- 4. Maintain contact with the County (1 and 6 year road plan) and State Highway 2 planning activities. Work closely with the State, property owners and other interested parties as development takes place along Highway 43 north of Bennet so as not to limit future land use options and to insure that development is planned with the best interests of the Village in mind.